

Future Of Old NTC Landfill Uncertain

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The Beacon

A section of the 1997 Defense Authorization Act (DAA) could change how an inactive landfill at the Naval Training Center is cleaned up, and it could change who does the cleaning.

"It's not a matter of the Navy being off the hook," said Keith Forman, Environmental Coordinator for the U.S. Navy's Interim Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC). Forman spoke at the Jan. 28 meeting of the Naval Training Center Restoration Advisory Board.

"This is complex and a lot of parties need to sit down and work this out," Forman said.

The Navy is now responsible for making sure waste buried at the 32-acre site doesn't contaminate surrounding groundwater or air. The Navy has said it will use a \$3 to \$4 million soil cap to contain the waste, and it has hired Bechtel National, Inc. to design the cap. The design work is about halfway completed.

Forman said the soil cap could contain the landfill indefinitely, if properly maintained. "A soil cap is a compacted soil cover over the waste ... you

want to decrease the landfill gas and leachate (liquid waste) to protect human health and the environment," he said. "You have to have groundwater monitoring wells and you need to measure gas emissions."

But Section 334 of the 1997 DAA could allow the Navy to transfer ownership of the site to another party interested in using it, before the cap is built.

Section 334 "authorizes the EPA administrator or the governor of a State to transfer contaminated Federal property before the completion of required remedial actions ... if

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the Administrator or governor determines that the property is suitable for transfer, and there are assurances that all remaining remedial actions will be taken following the transfer."

"Why waste taxpayer money on the soil cap, only to have it taken out and replaced with something else later, again with taxpayer money?" Forman questioned. He said that if the site is secured with a soil cap and later transferred to another party such as the city, and the property's new owner then decides to dig out or cover the site in a different way, taxpayer dollars would

be spent on the site twice.

"We're hoping to have all of this hashed out by August," Forman said. Representatives from the Navy and Port District may soon discuss the possibility of a transfer, he added.

Until the issue is settled, Bechtel National will continue to design the soil cap.

However, at least one member of the NTC Restoration Advisory Board said she isn't happy with the idea of a soil cap or property transfer. "There's toxic material in that landfill," said Z Kripke, who works for the Environmental Health Coalition. "I'd rather see the Navy clean up it, not cover it up. I'm keeping a good eye on this."

According to a study of the site (Extended Inactive Site Inspection, Inactive Landfill, NTC San Diego/Sept. 14, 1995), the inactive landfill might contain discarded paint and pesticides, metal-plating wastes and infectious wastes.

Forman said it was classified as a municipal landfill which he said typically contains discarded office supplies, newspaper, plastics and food wastes. The landfill was in operation from 1959 to 1971.

The Navy and Port District have not conducted any meetings on the issue of transferring ownership of the landfill site and no meetings have been scheduled.